

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Norton City Council was held on Tuesday, May 5, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the Municipal Council Chambers with Mayor William Mays presiding.

Present: Mark Caruso, Robert Fultz, William Mays, Joseph Fawbush,
and Delores Belcher

Also Present: Fred L. Ramey, Jr., City Manager and Bill Bradshaw, City Attorney

The invocation was given by Father Tim Drake and was followed by the pledge of allegiance led by Police Chief James C. Lane.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by unanimous vote, Council moved to adopt the minutes of the April 21, 2015 meeting as presented.

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There was no response to the Mayor's call for visitors.

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At this time, Mayor Mays advised there was a special recognition that Council would like to make tonight.

Mr. Ramey advised he, on behalf of Council, would like to recognize Father Tim Drake for his fourteen years of service to Council and the citizens of the City of Norton. Father Drake will be relocating to Gate City.

Mayor Mays asked Father Drake to come forward and he, with City Council members, presented him with a plaque. Father Drake thanked Council for this recognition, photographs were taken, and a round of applause was given to him.

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A public hearing was held on the proposed 2015-2016 budget for the Norton City Schools. Mr. Ramey advised that Dr. Perrigan presented Council with a summary of this budget at the April 21st meeting. At that time, the City Manager was instructed by Council to advertise a public hearing.

Dr. Perrigan was present and gave a brief synopsis of this budget. During this synopsis, he advised that the school system did not receive the Jobs for Virginia Graduates Program that he discussed with Council at the previous meeting and he encouraged Council to leave the \$25,000 in their budget in hopes of finding additional grants to match with City funds. The total local City share of this budget is \$2,325,481.

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Mayor Mays opened the public hearing.

There being no public comments, Mayor Mays closed the public hearing.

Following a brief discussion, Mayor Mays advised the City Manager to have the School Board budget on the May 19, 2015 agenda for consideration of adoption.

Mr. Ramey gave an update on the Bear Resistant Trash Container Project and advised that the City had requested \$10,000 in funding from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries approved the funding request which allowed the City to purchase ten of these containers. Via a PowerPoint presentation, he advised of the locations at which these containers had

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been installed in the Flag Rock Area. He expressed his appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Johnny Wills, District Terrestrial Biologist, of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries for advising this funding was available.

Council thanked Mr. Ramey for his hard work on this project.

Mr. Johnny Wills, District Terrestrial Biologist, of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, gave a presentation, via PowerPoint, on Living with Black Bears. The City Manager advised that our Police Department works with this agency and he wanted Mr. Wills to discuss some of the complaints the City has experienced and their recommendations for handling such complaints.

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Mayor Mays thanked Mr. Wills for this presentation and for his assistance in advising the City of the funding that was awarded to us for the purchase of the bear proof containers for Flag Rock.

The City Manager, by PowerPoint, presented Council with the fiscal year 2015-2016 budget. With the use of graphs, he illustrated to Council the rates of decline in property taxes, local taxes, sales taxes, and transient taxes. Meals Taxes have been the most consistent. The decline began in 2009 and has continued. He advised of the budget revenues and expenditures, shortfalls, and cuts in proposed modifications such as no capital projects, modifications in health insurance, discretionary funded agencies cut by 10%, and removal of the line item of contingency.

Revenue enhancements contain an increase of ten cents per pack in the Cigarette Tax, an increase in the Vehicle License Tax of \$5.00, a Real Estate Tax increase in the amount of ten cents per one hundred dollars of assessed value for a total of ninety cents per hundred dollars of assessed value, and a water rate increase of twenty five cents per 1,000 gallons. Also camping fees will increase from \$15.00 to \$20.00 per night, City Park Shelters will be billed at a rate of \$20.00 per day, and the Water Account Deposit will be raised to \$100.00 from \$80.00 and Water Reconnect Fee rising to \$50.00 from \$25.00. He will also explore the feasibility of securing a cash flow/line of credit for the City. He advised that the Norton Industrial Development Authority, at their May 4, 2015, meeting agreed to make a partial note payment in the amount of \$60,000 from their funds which would balance the City's budget.

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Council was given a budget calendar of events to be held in May and June.

It was the consensus of Council for the City Manager to advertise a public hearing on the City's 2015-2016 budget and a public hearing on the revenue enhancements discussed tonight.

In their packets, Council had been presented with A Resolution Proclaiming May 2015 as Foster Care Month in the City of Norton.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following unanimous vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council moved to adopt A Resolution Proclaiming May 2015 as Foster Care Month in the City fo Norton. (Insert)

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Council had a request for a transfer in the amount of \$220,000 to the Norton City Schools.

Upon a motion by Councilman Fawbush, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council moved to confirm a transfer in the amount of \$220,000 to the Norton City Schools.

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Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fawbush, and passed by unanimous roll call vote, Council went into closed meeting to discuss personnel as per Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the Code of Virginia as amended.

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Mayor Mays declared Council in closed meeting.

Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilman Fultz, and passed by roll call vote, Council moved to go back into open meeting.

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Mayor Mays declared Council back in open meeting.

The Clerk polled each member of Council as to the Certification of Closed Meeting with each answering yes. The Clerk then read A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. Upon a motion by Councilman Caruso, seconded by Councilwoman Belcher, and passed by the following unanimous vote: YES – Caruso, Fultz, Fawbush, Belcher, Mays, NO – None, ABSENT – None, Council moved to adopt A Resolution of the Certification of Closed Meeting. (Insert)

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In comments from the City Manager, Mr. Ramey advised that, as of Council's request at the last meeting, he had shared with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Council's continued support regarding the Expanding the Elk Protection Area.

Last fall, Councilman Fawbush asked him to contact railroad officials and see if they would pave the Esserville crossing. Earlier this week, all of the crossings in the City were repaved. He contacted the local office and thanked them for their effort.

An update was given on the following projects:

1. Safe Route to Schools Project: The crew is working seven days a week and they may not need the second crew. Since the last Council meeting, they have installed approximately 2,000 blocks. The DMME portion should be finished by June 30, 2015. Tier 3 has been tied in and they are ready to start Tier 4. After that, they will start Tier 5 and then finish Tier 1.
2. Phase III Water Project: A lot of progress has been made. There has been an 8" line from 8th to the Terrace, Highland, Chestnut, to the top of Chestnut, and approval has been received from the Health Department to begin making taps. An 8" line has been installed from City Hall to 7th Street, behind City Hall, 9th Street back to Virginia Avenue, and on to 10th Street.
3. 3rd Street Subsidence: The Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy have drilled three holes and did find a mine opening 30' below the surface which seemed to be causing the problem to study the situation and recommend a solution. This area has been surveyed and they have hired an engineering firm. Third Street may have to be closed for a period of time.

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He needs Council's confirmation on the meeting scheduled for May 16th for a planning meeting in order for him to notify the press. It was the consensus of Council to proceed with this meeting.

He had received a request from Circuit Court Clerk Jack Kennedy asking that the City consider a resolution of support for the designation of State Route 72 for possible inclusion in the National Scenic Byway System. A sample copy of a resolution has been put on Council members' desks. Should Council be interested, this could be put of the next agenda.

Councilman Caruso stated he had discussed this Mr. Kennedy and asked if he could get State Route 619 going to Flag Rock included with this. Mr. Kennedy felt it was feasible to do so. Councilman Caruso stated this added to the quest of getting more tourists in the area. Following a brief discussion, it was the consensus of Council to have this placed on the next agenda.

The City's Water Treatment Plant has received an award from the Virginia Department of Health's Office of Drinking Water for gold level for Excellence in Clarification, Filtration, and Backwash. Only 37 of the Commonwealth's 131 Water Treatment Plants received this award.

A Household Hazardous Waste Pick-Up will be held on Saturday, May 16th, from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

In comments from the City Attorney, Mr. Bradshaw advised there was an article in the Virginia Municipal League E News letter in Council's packets advising that, effective January 2016, any Statement of Economic Interest filer's forms which are not submitted on time will result in a penalty of \$250 for the filer.

In comments from Council:

Councilman Caruso stated he would like to see support on the resolution of adding Route 72 on the Federal registry and he is in hopes that Route 619 will be done also. Mr. Ramey advised this will require action by both the City and Wise County.

He advised that Trout Unlimited has been discussing with him again the possibility of having the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries stock our reservoir four to five times annually. The City Manager advised that this has not been discussed recently; however in the past, it was the consensus of Councils to keep it a reservoir and under our control. Following a discussion, Councilman Caruso was advised to have Trout Unlimited contact the City Manager.

During the Keep America Beautiful Month's Saturday Pick-Up, he noticed that there is several trash bags on the railroad property at the bottom of the viaduct. He asked that the City send an official letter asking for cleaning of this area since it is at the gateway to the City. He also advised there are copperheads at this location. There are also six-8" pieces of new waterline at the corner of the Holiday Inn that should be picked up for future use.

He has heard numerous positive comments about the Woodbooger statute and the Safe Routes to Schools Project.

He has noticed a lot of rust on City trucks and feels that the City needs to look at a Preventative Maintenance Program.

Other items he brought up was the increase in tickets issued by the Police Department, action to be taken on the ATV Ordinance, opening the lower reservoir to canoes and kayaks, the Farmers Market Building, an update on the Norton Rescue Squad, and his being uncomfortable with raising taxes.

In comments from Councilman Fultz:

He advised the Safe Routes to School Project is looking better every day. He has seen lots of photos on Facebook taken at Flag Rock with the Woodbooger.

As to raising taxes, he advised that due to the economic conditions the City is experiencing at this time, he feels that the citizens realized that a tax increase would be forthcoming even though it is a painful situation.

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He commended Councilman Fawbush for the work done soliciting and obtaining donations to pay for the Woodbooger Statue.

In comments from Councilman Fawbush:

He stated that the City should give the ATV Ordinance a try and feels like it will not be a problem for downtown merchants or downtown traffic on week-ends; however, the Police Department should be given full reign to perform their duties regarding ATVs.

He was at Flag Rock this week-end and all the picnic areas were full and kids were all over the Woodbooger statute.

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He extended congratulations to Teddy Huff and his Boy Scout Troop for doing the maintenance at the High Knob Recreation Area and thanks to Jorge Hershel for contacting Mr. Huff with information on this.

In comments from Councilwoman Belcher:

She stated that the City Manager is a very busy man.

She spoke positively on the lower reservoir as to permitting canoes and kayaks there. Also she felt that Council should move forward on the ATV Ordinance.

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She also advised that someone on Facebook was advertising for the City and was advised that it was Neil Walker. She stated people need to work together – not just the Council, but citizens also.


She inquired as to whether there were any foster homes in the City and was advised by the City Manager that there was not.

There were no comments from Mayor Mays.

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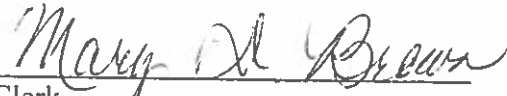
There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned.

CITY OF NORTON, VIRGINIA



William J. Mays, Mayor

ATTEST:



Clerk